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WILL-POWER

Ways to Develop It

By

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Chapter

I. THE BASIS OF WILL-POWER	9
II. FINDING OUR IDEAL - -	13
III. BELIEF IN YOURSELF - - - - -	20
IV. MAKING A BEGINNING - - - -	27
V. OBSTACLES TO WILL-POWER - - -	33
VI. THE FIXATION OF HABIT - - - -	38
VII. RULES FOR HABIT FORMATION - - -	47
VIII. SUMMARY - - - - - - -	53



FOREWORD

MANY people find it difficult to make themselves act. Others find themselves confronted by a bad habit which they cannot overcome. This little book is written to help them.

I trust it will lead the reader to a better understanding of himself. Self-knowledge is half the battle. Having an adequate ideal in life is the other half.

In the struggle for self-mastery and worthwhile living the reader must have patience with himself. No book is a talisman. It can only be a friendly guide pointing out the way.

The journey may be rough and long, but I have dealt with the main difficulties and have the confidence that I am not misleading anyone. If what I have written enables the reader to find the right road and gives him hope and courage to follow it, I shall be very happy.

JOHN KENNEDY.

CHAPTER I

THE BASIS OF WILL-POWER

SOME folk have fantastic notions about the basis of will-power. They meet a man with a large chin or a Roman nose, and their first impression of him is, "Here is a man with a strong will." He *looks* a superior type of person, and they mentally endow him with superior qualities.

Often the strong-looking type of person "gets away with it," because people expect him to act in a certain way. They leave room for him, and he steps in.

Let us freely admit that the superior-looking type of person has a better chance of having his will-power taken for granted, but his physiognomy proves nothing as to his actual possession of that quality.

One of the most masterful-looking men I ever met was a "down-and-out." He had a head like a Roman emperor. If looks meant anything, he should have been managing director of an industrial combine or sitting in the Cabinet. He had, indeed, at one time been the owner of a first-class business; but he could not keep away from drink. Good looks do not count for much.

Neither has physical robustness got much to do with will-power. Take the case of the late Philip

Snowden, who rose to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was a cripple most of his life; yet he had the energy and determination to rise to one of the highest offices in the land.

Will-power is not a matter of physiognomy or physique. It is the result of a well-organized personality. The man who has will-power is the man who knows what he wants. He has an ideal which organizes his energies. It is the ideal of passing an examination that sends the student to his books. It is the ideal of keeping his home going and educating his children and retiring with a competence that enables the business man to catch the 8.25 regularly each morning. It is the ideal of serving his Master that keeps the missionary in the mission field.

It may seem absurd to say so, but even the drunkard has an ideal. His ideal is a state of intoxication. He organizes his energies to obtain drink. The trouble is not with his will-power but with his ideal.

If public houses were only opened from 2 to 3 a.m., there would be plenty of men with sufficient will-power to leave the house on a winter's night and go and have a drink. They are not endowed with a mighty supply of will-power, but the satisfaction of a drink is for them a compelling ideal.

Will-power, as McDougall says, is character in action. We all have will-power in some degree. If we want a thing very badly, it induces effort. When we lack will-power it really means we lack sufficient inducement to sustained and purposive action. We lack a clear ideal.

People sometimes remark of an individual who is making rather a mess of things, "The trouble with him is that he has no will-power." The remark is absurd. If he had no will-power he would not be able to get out of his bed in the morning.

The trouble with the man who is making a mess of things is that his will-power needs reorganization. He may have become discouraged, thwarted, or never have seen clearly what he wants to do with himself. He lacks impetus because he lacks an ideal or has become persuaded that his ideal is impossible.

Once give a man a fresh belief in himself and something to live for and he will find his own will-power. He will assert himself when he wants something very badly. Will is simply character organized to secure a certain end or ends.

When thinking of this, we must remember that the personality is one and indivisible. The whole man functions in all of his actions. The power to act or not to act depends on how the personality is organized, the satisfaction it deems worth while and the habits induced in it through past behaviour.

To change a course of action involves reorganizing our lives in the light of a new ideal, the substitution of fresh satisfactions for old ones, and the inducing of new habits through constant repetition. This new set to our activities does not depend on the possession of a faculty, but on whether we see our new ideal clearly and on whether we desire it ardently. The man who is able to identify himself with a rational ideal is well on the way to gaining will-power.

John A. Hutton of the *British Weekly* tells a good story which illustrates this point.

A certain young man in the town of Coatbridge was making his way along the High Street under the influence of liquor. In this questionable state he "made up to" a young lady of his acquaintance whom he secretly admired. She was scared at his condition and ran away. He there and then vowed she would never run away from him again. They were most happily married within the year.

The new ideal of being worthy of the girl he loved replaced the old ideal of the satisfaction of a drink. It was not a question of will-power, but of finding an ideal which harmonized his energies in a new direction.

The first step, therefore, towards self-mastery is to form an adequate ideal. It was Emerson who coined the phrase about "hitching one's waggon to a star." We must find our star.

Points to Remember

1. The man who has will-power is the man who knows what he wants.
2. To change a course of action involves reorganizing our activities in the light of a new ideal.
3. We must find our own ideal.

CHAPTER II

FINDING OUR IDEAL

EACH man must find his own ideal. For some it may be the attainment of a certain type of personality; for others the passing of an examination; the achievement of promotion at the office; the securing of a house in the suburbs; the attainment of a certain reputation; the ability to get up each morning at seven. The ideal is that which appeals to us as offering us satisfaction.

There is no universally accepted ideal. Each man evolves his own. Some ideals are very poor and inadequate. The ideal to the artist is the expression of the beautiful; it is an adequate ideal, for man is made to create and to respond to beauty.

The more moral, æsthetic and rational our ideals are, the more adequate they are. An ideal in life should embrace in some form or other the good, the beautiful and the true.

The best place to look for an adequate ideal is in the field of biography. Find out how other men have lived and what is possible to human nature; take a rational view of your own capabilities; do not pitch your standard too low; seek to emulate your "hero."

What are heroes for but to make real and attractive to us our own possibilities? Happy the boy who has a hero or the man with a heroine, especially if that heroine is his wife!

But until we see the ideal for ourselves and ardently long to attain to it or be worthy of it, it has no compulsion over us. Others may suggest it and dwell on the happiness and self-realization which it brings, but until we consciously make it our own, it has no power over us.

Character is not made by "will-power" as such but by the kind of ideal that attracts us. Our search for will-power, therefore, is really a search for a stimulating ideal.

The poor boy who knows that his only hope of success in life is passing a certain examination will "scorn delights and live laborious days" and by constant application to study exhibit consistent "will-power." His actions are determined by the compelling force of his ideal. The smoker who is caught by the ideal of physical fitness or the saving of money or some other satisfying objective will surrender the pleasure of smoking to attain his end.

The acquirement of "will-power," therefore, involves the finding of an adequate ideal which will bind the self together in purposive living. Life is very much like a game of football. The first thing a player needs to know is where the goal is. Once he has made up his mind on that all-important point, he can direct all his energies towards getting the ball

into the net. But if he has no idea about where he must drive the ball, we get very purposeless football.

An ideal gives direction to energy. Generally speaking, the worthier the ideal, the more energy it will call forth towards its realization. An ideal that is interesting and pleasurable, that satisfies our feelings of self-respect and that is useful to others, produces the maximum of energy.

Such an ideal is that of making a success of the job in hand, or emulation of the worthy qualities of another, or the service of a "cause." Religion, the service of God, integrates and gives purpose in our living provided we clarify in our minds the qualities of the God we worship. We become like that which we love.

Inadequate ideals, such as getting rich, or being recognized as somebody of account, or being known as "a jolly good fellow," dull our perception of more adequate ideals. As ideals, these worldly things are ultimately unsatisfying because they merely gratify one instinctive urge, such as the acquisitive instinct, the instinct of self-display or the herd-instinct. When gratified, they leave the rest of the personality restless and unsatisfied.

As inducers of will-power they operate in too narrow a field. A man may be ruthless in his determination to secure a title, and this determination to get on and get honour may give a certain consistency to his character. All the same, outside the field of his ideal, he may be vacillating and weak.

Barrie, in his one-act play called *The Will*, tells

us the story of the rise and fall of a city business man. In the first scene he is a clerk in an office, earning £170 a year, and he has come to a lawyer's office to make his will. All is comparatively plain sailing. His total estate, not much, is to be left to his wife, with one or two little legacies to others which she, in her kindness, insists upon.

In the second scene, many years later, he calls to revise his will. He has seventy thousand pounds to dispose of. He has evidently proved himself a man of considerable determination and will-power. Seventy thousand is not picked up in the street.

In the last scene he is Sir Philip Ross, a widower, come to make a last will and testament and with more money than he knows what to do with. That is the trouble. He has made the money, but he has not the slightest idea as to how he wants to dispose of it. He goes away; God knows where.

It is the mark of an unintelligent personality to have too narrow an objective. Such a person may have a strong "will," but he may have a mind that is closed to all the finer possibilities of life. A man is what he sees in life. The higher our level of vision the higher our potentiality. One man sees pleasure, another money, another honour, another beauty, another brotherhood, another God. Each is made by his vision, and breadth of vision makes a full man.

Energy is repressed by aimlessness, not having enough to live for to draw forth our powers. Nature

does not continue to bestow on us more power than we are using and if we are just living for petty little successes or vanities she soon withdraws her gifts.

We must aspire to the highest that we see and make it our first business to see something worth while. A big aim creates a big man. A fine ideal co-ordinates and harmonizes all his energies and the finer the ideal, the finer the man. Strong men are created by clear vision.

It is true that what a man is determines the ideal he adopts. A boy in a depraved environment may adopt an entirely different ideal from a boy brought up in a good home. His ideal may be to be the leader of a gang. The ideal of the other may be to become a medical missionary. We find our ideals in our environment.

But let us remember that our environment is not our immediate surroundings. It is more mental than physical. It is provided for us by the books we read, the pictures we see, the people with whom we come into contact. We are all living in a bigger world than that denoted by our postal address. Our ideal is determined by that part of the world which attracts us. The attraction depends on the kind of person we are. If we are selfish, we shall be attracted by a selfish ideal. If we seek for knowledge we shall be attracted by a scholarly ideal. If we admire courage, we shall be attracted by a heroic ideal.

So that the boy in the bad home and the boy in the good home are not so far out in their ideals after all.

They are both attracted by a heroic ideal; only the hero of the one is the gangster, and the hero of the other is Jesus Christ.

The trouble is not with the boy but in the ideal his environment presents him with. The one is socially inadequate and leads to stultification. The other is socially adequate because it brings him into a right relationship with the social group, and enables him to fulfil a heroic ideal in a life of service.

It may be that the boy from the bad home cannot find a better ideal, that he is attracted more by a real gangster than by a nebulous, legendary figure called Jesus Christ. That is a matter of social ethics, with which we are not here immediately concerned. The point we wish to make is quite clear—he and the rest of us have the power of forming ideals which give direction to our personalities.

It is this coherence we call will-power. The boy who becomes the leader of a gang may land in prison. The boy who becomes a missionary may end in martyrdom. Both have will-power.

As far as the ethical content of our purpose in life is concerned, we may be permitted to say this: It is a wise man who scrutinizes his objectives in the light of morality and religion.

We must not only harmonize our powers but live in harmony with others. The paradox of life is that we must not only serve ourselves but serve the social group if we would know freedom and happiness in living. Serving our own exclusive purposes leads

FINDING OUR IDEAL

to maladjustment, introversion and unhappiness. It is time we were changing our objective-if it cannot do better for us than that.

Points to Remember

1. The best place to look for an adequate ideal is the field of biography.
2. The ideal that has influence over us must be our own, accepted ideal; not what the other person thinks good for us.
3. The finer the ideal, the finer the man.

CHAPTER III

BELIEF IN YOURSELF

THE other constituent in will-power is self-respect. R. L. Stevenson, in *The Ebb-tide*, tells us in a few pages the story of a man's downfall. He says nothing about will-power, but emphasises two features of a beachcomber's story, his lack of a constraining ideal and a gradual decline in his self-respect.

It is worth while considering his tale, which might be entitled "The Evolution of a Failure." It tells the story of the evolution of any failure.

I have taken the liberty of italicizing the passages which emphasise the psychological elements in his downfall. The italics may spoil the literary style, but just now we are interested in psychology.

"Robert Herrick was the son of an intelligent, active and ambitious man, small partner in a considerable London house. Hopes were conceived of the boy; he was sent to a good school, gained there an Oxford scholarship, and proceeded in due course to the Western University. With all his talent and taste (and he had much of both) Robert was deficient in consistency and intellectual manhood, wandered in bypaths of study, worked at music or

at metaphysics when he should have been at Greek, and took at last a paltry degree.

"Almost at the same time, the London house was disastrously wound up; Mr. Herrick must begin the world again as a clerk in a strange office, and Robert relinquish his ambitions and accept with gratitude a career that he detested and despised. He had no head for figures, no interest in affairs, detested the constraint of hours, and despised the aims and the success of merchants. To grow rich was none of his ambitions; rather to do well.

"A worse or a more bold young man would have refused the destiny; perhaps tried his future with his pen; perhaps enlisted. Robert, more prudent, possibly more timid, consented to embrace that way of life in which he could most readily assist his family. *But he did so with a mind divided*; fled the neighbourhood of former comrades; and chose, out of several positions placed at his disposal, a clerkship in New York.

"His career thenceforth was one of unbroken shame. He did not drink, he was exactly honest, he was never rude to his employers, yet was everywhere discharged. *Bringing no interest to his duties, he brought no attention*; his day was a tissue of things neglected and things done amiss; and from place to place and from town to town, he carried the character of one thoroughly incompetent.

"No man can bear the word applied to him without some flush of colour, as indeed there is none other that so emphatically slams in a man's face *the door*

of self-respect. And to Herrick, who was conscious of talents and acquirements, who looked down upon those humble duties in which he was found wanting, the pain was the more exquisite.

“Early in his fall, he had ceased to be able to make remittances; shortly after, having nothing but failure to communicate, he ceased writing home; and about a year before this tale begins, turned suddenly upon the streets of San Francisco by a vulgar and infuriated German Jew, he had broken the last bonds of self-respect, and upon a sudden impulse, changed his name and invested his last dollar in a passage on the mail brigantine, the “City of Papeete.”

“With what expectation he had trimmed his flight for the South Seas, Herrick perhaps scarcely knew. Doubtless there were fortunes to be made in pearl and copra; doubtless others not more gifted than himself had climbed in the island world to be queen’s consorts and king’s ministers.

“But if Herrick had gone there with any manful purpose, he would have kept his father’s name: the alias betrayed his moral bankruptcy; *he had struck his flag*; he entertained no hope to reinstate himself or help his straitened family; and he came to the islands (where he knew the climate to be soft, bread cheap, and manners easy) a skulker from life’s battle and his own immediate duty. Failure, he had said, was his portion; let it be a pleasant failure.

“It is fortunately not enough to say ‘I will be base.’ Herrick continued in the islands his career of failure; but in the new scene and under the new

name, he suffered no less sharply than before. A place was got, it was lost in the old style; from the long-suffering of the keepers of restaurants he fell to more open charity upon the wayside.

"Drenched with rains, broiling by day, shivering by night, a disused and ruinous prison for a bedroom, his diet begged or pilfered out of rubbish heaps, his associates two creatures equally outcast with himself, he had drained for months the cup of penitence. He had known what it was to be resigned, what it was to break forth in a childish fury of rebellion against fate, and what it was to sink into the coma of despair.

"The time had changed him. He told himself no longer tales of an easy and perhaps agreeable declension: he read his nature otherwise; he had proved himself incapable of rising, and he now learned by experience that he could not stoop to fall."

Here we have the picture of a man who had no compelling ideal. *He gradually lost self-respect and, therefore, will-power.* He ended up as a beachcomber because he had no purpose in life and lost conceit of himself. It was only when another man restored him to self-respect by showing some belief in him that he was brought back to manhood.

The only means of retrieving will-power is to restore self-respect. We must stop the tendency to say, "I'm no good," "I cannot do this," "It's no use trying." We must find out the things we can do, take a firm hold on them, believe in our competence in some department of life and reach out to other attainments.

Because we cannot be good at everything, it does not mean that we are good for nothing.

There is probably no branch of psychology which is more helpful and promising to-day than vocational psychology which seeks to find out what people are actually suited for. People who are of mature age to-day had not the advantage of such assistance when they were young and many of them have simply floundered into the right vocation or are continuing to function rather badly as square pegs in round holes.

Things are different for the younger generation, and there is every chance of their being better in the future. But the results being secured by vocational psychology should reassure us that if we are no good at one thing we may be a great success at something else.

Some time ago a case came under my observation where a little fellow whom we will call Robin was letting down the family tradition of "braininess." His two brothers who were at the same school were carrying all before them in their classes while little Robin was in a fair way to being classed as a dunce.

Fortunately, his headmaster dealt with him wisely and gave him a chance in the handicraft section to find out that Robin was very clever with his hands. At the end of his first session in the handiwork section, he came home and proudly deposited at the feet of his father and mother a pair of boots he had made himself! Not bad for a dunce!

We are all good at something. Strive to find out what you are good at. It is no reflection on a man

that he should take the wrong road. It is a reflection on him that he should continue on the wrong road, if it is possible for him to change his direction. It is the prerogative of man that he is able to change his mind.

To change one's mind with good reason is a sign of intelligence. To refuse to do so is a sign of unintelligent obstinacy. To say, "No, I must not change my mind. That would be weak. I have taken up a certain course and I must be resolute," is not to act as a man but as a mule.

If a way of life is not suiting us, if certain companions lead us into an unsatisfactory course of living, or if we find no interest in our environment or our profession, we should seek to arrive at an intelligent understanding of our capacities and what best suits us. We should form a new ideal of life and exert every effort to realise it. What does it matter if people think us inconsistent if we have now found something worth while? In finding something worth living for we enhance our self-respect and soon earn the respect of others.

The man who knows his capabilities and is employing them in congenial tasks is living to some purpose. Such a man does not need to trouble about will-power. His personality will organize itself to realize his ideal.

In dealing with others who seem to be lacking in will-power we must be careful in our contacts with them to maintain their self-respect. Give a man the impression that you think he is no good and you do him infinite harm, besides losing your influence over him.

A courteous and considerate attitude towards one

who is slipping in his self-esteem is of the utmost value. He may not be worthy of much respect, but the fact that we remain friendly and think well of him gives him something to hold on to.

To take an illustration from an epic of human endeavour, when Scott lay dying in his tent in the Antarctic he wrote to Barrie: "I want you to think well of me, and of my end." If a man like Scott out in the lonely vastness had a regard for the opinion of a man whom he would never see again, so have lesser men in their own particular struggles.

No matter what a man's fight may be, one of the mainsprings to action is the esteem of someone whose good opinion he values.

If you know anyone who has lost his own ideal of himself, let him see that you, whose opinion he may value much more than you realize, still retain your ideal of him. To let a man see that there is still an ideal to be realized in your good opinion of him is to maintain for him a basis of purposeful striving.

A man will believe in himself as long as somebody else believes in him. In times of difficulty what is friendship for if not to show belief in one another?

Points to Remember

1. The only means of retrieving will-power is to restore self-respect.
2. Because we cannot be good at everything, does not mean that we are good for nothing.
3. Inconsistency is not a bad thing if it means self-improvement.

CHAPTER IV

MAKING A BEGINNING

SO far we have been speaking of the basis of will-power. Its basis is idealism and self-respect. One's idealism may be limited and one's self-respect may not be saintly, but as long as a man has purpose and faith he will not lack will-power.

Yet, granted this basis, one of the chief difficulties of achieving anything worth while is the difficulty of making a beginning. The student, for example, may have purpose and he may also have faith in his abilities, but he cannot settle down to study. His idealism is apt to spend itself in day-dreaming, and his self-respect is maintained by some measure of attainment in the past, but when he is left alone to study he cannot harness his mind to the job in hand.

How are we to overcome this inertia which, if persisted in, stultifies our usefulness and nullifies our ambitions? Granted our ideal, how are we to rouse ourselves to the necessary action to attain it?

Let us take the case of the student. He must induce action by deliberate meditation on the advantages of study. It is only commonsense if he is going to settle down to a long course of study that he should

make up his mind whether it is worth while and set his goal clearly before him.

He should quite deliberately consider the advantages to be derived from passing his examination or the disadvantages consequent on failure. He should bring these advantages and disadvantages as vividly as possible before him in imaginative detail, the pleasure of success, the happiness of his parents, the society of his equals, the life of professional competence and usefulness. He should try to face honestly in imaginative detail the consequences of failure, the door that it will shut on his hopes, the disappointment he will bring to others, the falling out of the society of his equals.

I do not say that he should concentrate on the possibility of failure till he is thoroughly scared and inhibited by it, but he should so become aware of it that he is steeled to the resolve that, if it is within his power, he will win through to success.

He must get a "drive" on himself by facing up to the realities of the situation and harnessing his mind to the task in hand as something that must be done before all others. Such a meditation on the worthwhileness of the course he is pursuing will provide him with the initial impulse to settle down to study.

Having developed a favourable sentiment towards his work, he must endeavour to fix that sentiment by giving it actual expression. He must not say, "I will begin to-morrow." He should begin to-day.

MAKING A BEGINNING

He should think along these lines: Express enthusiasm in deeds. To act is easy at that moment and action fixes habit. To-morrow the enthusiasm may have faded a little and more reflection may be needed to engender it. The advantages of the course one is pursuing need to be dwelt on once more till "shining in their own light" they exercise their compulsion again. Then the sentiment must be expressed in action, and so on, until the habit of work is formed.

It is easier to form the habit of study if one is regular in time and place of work. To be at one's desk at a certain time, to sit down, and open a book, is a quicker and a surer means of making a beginning than waiting till one is "in the mood for it." What is a mood in a healthy young man? One does not "forge the mind" on moods. Keep a time and place for the job you have in hand. That is the only manly way to study.

In tackling a course of study it is good to remember the old maxim "Divide and conquer."

Don't be intimidated by turning over the leaves of the textbook, and seeing page after page of mysterious facts and figures. You are apt to sink back in your chair in utter hopelessness. "I can never master all that," you say.

You are not asked to master it *at one sitting*! What is the task in hand? The next two pages, or a chapter? That is the task for to-day.

So far we have been speaking of the student as the one to whom these observations on "getting going"

might prove most useful, but the technique is the same in every situation. Meditation, a distinctly formed resolution, putting the resolution into practice at once, the formation of habit through regularity, tackling the task of to-day without worrying about to-morrow are necessary steps in the development of will-power in any situation.

A man may wish to stop a bad habit. Let him think of himself as free from the habit. Let him keep on dwelling on the prospect of freedom, constantly bringing it before him in imaginative reality.

Let him work up the prospect till he feels enthusiastic for it. That is the hard task, but it is performed by the imagination, not the will. It is always possible to imagine. "When an action is conceived, it is already begun." The first stage of victory has been passed when one has thought of victory. Then, when enthusiasm is still hot within him, let him give his enthusiasm expression. One act of self-denial or refusal and one has taken a firm step along the road to winning the strong will to conquer a bad habit.

The step is more easily taken when, instead of making a blank denial, one energetically and firmly turns to some other positive task. To find something else to do in the moment of temptation, to substitute a new way of spending one's evening, to find a new companion or new company in favour of the old companion or the old company, these are *affirmative* ways of breaking with habits and are much easier to adopt and maintain than the attempt to deny ourselves through the exercise of "will-power."

They substitute new interest and provide fresh channels for energy. To sit down, or sit at home for an evening in an effort to exert one's "will-power" over a temptation, is just to give the imagination a chance to brood over the satisfaction we are denying ourselves; and when the imagination begins to fight against the will, it wins the day.

Our resolves should be expressed in activity and this should not be a mere doleful substitute for the pleasure we are missing, but one which appeals to our deliberate judgment as a more satisfying alternative.

When once a man has thought over a new line of action and seen in imagination its advantages and put his resolution into practice, he should, as physicians say, "repeat the dose." Reflection, resolution, action—that is the programme for the next day, until the alternative activity becomes customary and habitual. See the goal and keep on seeing it. That is the way to win.

It is good for a man, if he wishes to develop will-power in these conflicts with "the world, the flesh and the devil," to think not of himself but of someone who loves him and who would be tremendously disappointed at his fall. Let him fill his mind with the image of the person, and it will steel his will to resist the thing.

If a lapse occurs and the rule is broken, too much time should not be wasted in crying over spilt milk. The work must be taken up again—imagination, resolution, action—in the confidence that *a failure*

WILL-POWER

is not a future. A lapse may be costly, having broken down the sequence of habit, but it is not at all decisive. It is the maintaining of the ideal that is decisive.

Points to Remember

1. Express enthusiasm in action.
2. Action fixes habit.
3. If you are physically fit, pay no heed to your moods.
4. "Divide and conquer."
5. Don't cry over spilt milk.

CHAPTER V

OBSTACLES TO WILL-POWER

SOMETIMES we begin on a course of conduct with the best intentions and find that we cannot keep it up. We adopt a fine ideal, but we fail to carry it through. We have vision, but no power.

This lack of power may be due to the fact that some important part of our personality is being repressed. A student may desire to excel in his studies and make a name for himself in the scholastic world. At the same time he may be attracted by the advantages of a business career; he may have longings after money and power.

He thinks it sordid to think of these things and resolutely applies himself to his books. But he finds himself unable to concentrate and suffers from headache and insomnia. When he sits trying to concentrate, the mind wanders off in day dreaming.

He finds himself thinking not of Pasteur or Lister or other giants of the scientific world, but rather of Bernhard Baron and Lord Nuffield and suchlike captains of industry with wealth and influence. He thinks of himself as conducting successful commercial operations or benefiting his fellow men by large contributions to the common good. Wavering to

and fro in the foreground of his consciousness is the book he is reading ; in the background, continually asserting itself, is his repressed desire for wealth and power.

This is a simple illustration of repression. There are other forms of repression which are no less inhibiting. The war gave instances of hundreds of cases of repressed shock. A soldier would be buried by a bursting shell. He would be dug out relatively unhurt and lie for a few weeks in hospital making complete recovery from his physical injuries. Then it would be found that he could not move an arm or his legs or that he suffered from some other form of paralysis.

Cases like these were cured again and again by the inhibiting experience being brought into consciousness. To live a terrifying experience over again, to recognize it, and bring it under the control of the conscious will, is to recover lost ability.

There are many shocks other than shell shock. A man or a girl may receive the shock of a broken engagement. It may be passed over as a thing of little moment. " We were not suited to each other, and we agreed to part."

Yet all the time, the shock to self-esteem and to the natural sexual instinct is being repressed and the shocked system cannot enter into life with zest and purpose. The mind has only half its energy, or less than half, to express in its daily work. The rest is standing guard over a part of the personality that is clamouring for recognition.

OBSTACLES TO WILL-POWER

Until we face the hurt we have received and consciously readjust our purposes in the light of it, we shall be irritable, fatigued and restless. Shocks should not be suppressed ; they should at least be recognized and, if possible, expressed in some new channel of activity.

Buried fears also are a frequent cause of lack of will-power. The fear of failure, of being hurt, of being ridiculed, paralyses effort. Many of these fears are legacies of the past.

A man would like to make his way in business, but he is afraid to go out and meet people. He lacks self-confidence in encountering new customers and reconciles himself to this attitude by some such phrase as " I don't believe in pushing for business," or " If I have a good article to sell, people will come to me. I don't need to go to them."

The truth of the matter may be that at some period of his life he had a shock to his self-esteem by some harsh or unjust thing said to him and he is afraid of being hurt again. But he will not admit this fear to himself so he rationalizes it and gives his conduct a self-satisfying interpretation.

Until he discovers the origin of his fear and recognizes it as a disconcerting incident that can happen to any man, he will lack the " push " which is necessary for his business.

A repressed sense of guilt will also inhibit a man's energies. If a man has done something which he knows to be wrong, and has smothered it up, he will find it asserting itself, if he has any self-respect at all,

in a lack of confidence. He may even become suspicious, ill at ease in company, and unduly sensitive to what others are saying or thinking about him.

Until he puts things right as far as he can and gets right with himself and with God, he will not find moral freedom.

It will be seen, then, that to achieve purpose and drive in our living we must not take ourselves for granted. We must know and accept ourselves and reorganize things if need be.

Apart from shocks and fears and sins, this self-knowledge involves also a recognition of the forces we are seeking to control. We must learn to know the various urges or instincts of our natures and the limitations imposed on us by our physical or mental incapacity, or our environment.

Our physical incapacity we will soon know. In course of time we shall discover that some mental flights are beyond our powers. The limitations of our environment may have to be accepted, but knowledge of our emotional make-up is not easily come by. It is here that the psychologist can help us.

Roughly speaking, he divides the energies of the mind into three main groups. He calls one the group of self-regarding tendencies; the other the group of sex tendencies. Our social tendencies make up the third group.

There is no need to go into all the sub-divisions of these instincts that the psychologists have elaborated. It is sufficient to say that we must recognize these forces of self-aggression, sex-satisfaction and

social solidarity and find some way of expressing or sublimating them before we can have a well-organized personality that is able to find happiness in purposive living.

Any refusal to admit to ourselves the instincts and urges of our natures will be penalized by loss of power. That does not mean to say that these urges must always find direct expression.

In many cases that is impossible. What is important is that they should be recognized. It may lead to a deliberate renunciation, but such renunciation is power, for our emotional "drives" are brought under the control of conscious purpose. Suppression is conflict and where there is conflict there is always loss of energy.

Self-knowledge is the indispensable basis of will-power.

Points to Remember

1. The lack of power may be due to the fact that some important part of the personality is being repressed.
2. "Know thyself."

CHAPTER VI

THE FIXATION OF HABIT

IN the endeavour to fix new habits of life we find that old habits, desires and impulses keep re-asserting themselves. They occupy the field and are jealous of any newcomer. The new has to fight its way forward through stubborn opposition.

This opposition in itself is not a bad thing. It gives zest and interest to living. What would life be without opposition? We must get used to internal as well as external opposition and accept it all as part of the game.

It is a good thing to accustom ourselves to the feeling of opposition by tackling our inertias when they present themselves. If you have a letter you do not wish to write, go and do it now. You will find that when the thing is begun it arouses its own interest. "Do it now" is a good maxim. The mastery of even small oppositions induces a sense of power and gives us confidence in ourselves.

In bigger and more difficult tasks we should adopt a deliberately positive attitude to the work in hand. "I can" is a better inducer of action than "I am not sure." It is an invitation to imagination and will to work together, and once we have begun on a task

THE FIXATION OF HABIT

with confidence we have a zest for carrying it through. Interest is awakened and self-assertion urges one to go on and finish. The opposition is forgotten. The imagination has had no time to work on the difficulties.

Suppose for example that you are learning to drive a motor car. You are sitting in the driver's seat, and your route lies through the main streets of a busy town. You sit in the car wondering whether you are competent to undertake the journey. The longer you sit and the more you think about it, the greater an ordeal it becomes. You wonder if you will be able to change down on the hill in High Street, how you will fare when you get into the thick of the traffic in Broad Street. You even begin to doubt your ability to stop the car in an emergency.

All the difficulties present themselves in imaginative review till you are "all of a dither." Once you are on the way, however, these difficulties have a way of vanishing. The mind has no leisure to imagine. All your faculties are concentrated on the task in hand, and you come through quite well.

All tasks are like that. They are more formidable in prospect than in actual performance. Even giving a speech, which makes your mouth dry at the very thought of facing your audience, is not so difficult as you thought it would be. We have all an overplus of energy ready to pour itself into the task in hand. The mind has a strange way of bracing up itself to deal with an actual situation.

Get into the actual situation as quickly as possible.

Survey what you have to do; take up a positive attitude to it and then begin.

Having experienced the feeling of victory over opposition and having increased our self-confidence through a positive attitude to difficult tasks, we may be prepared to tackle some real weakness in character that calls for "will-power." It may be the overcoming of some bad habit like self-abuse, drinking, or disinclination for work.

We have already dwelt on the value of deliberate meditation. That must be gone through to build up our determination in our new line of action and set it before us as a clear ideal. The new line of action must lead to a desirable goal. A healthy and vigorous body, a disciplined and furnished mind, professional competence, the respect of others, the happiness we are able to give to others—these must constantly be dwelt upon the mind in the most attractive light.

Having fixed our ideal we may then try to sink it into the personality by means of auto-suggestion.

Auto-suggestion is not something mysterious or magical. It is a technique based on the psychological fact that an idea firmly held by the mind tends to realize itself in action. It is the process of consciously planting an ideal in the mind. By deliberate meditation we discover our ideal. By auto-suggestion we keep it steadily before us, embedding it in the personality, as it were, that it may grow into fruition.

Let me explain. Our actions are motivated by ideas. "Come and have a drink" is not only an

invitation; it is a suggestion, an idea—the idea of having a drink. The mind is either hospitable to the idea or it rejects it.

“Come and have a drink” means nothing to me. It conjures up no imaginative pleasure. The same invitation extended to another man appeals immediately to his imagination. The idea of the pleasure of a drink tends to realize itself as all ideas do, and he accepts the invitation.

Unless there is in his mind some counter idea, such as the idea of “the man who does not drink,” the *idea* of having a drink will express itself in the *act* of having a drink. The idea has been suggested to him and in the absence of a counter idea tends to realize itself in action.

This is an example of hetero-suggestion, a suggestion made by another. Hetero-suggestion is not always made, of course, by word of mouth. It may be made by a poster or any other form of advertisement; it may come to us through one thing suggesting another. The world around us is constantly making hetero-suggestions to us. Modern advertising is hetero-suggestion raised to a fine art.

Suggestion then is not something occult and mysterious but an everyday experience. What we are speaking of now is auto-suggestion, the deliberate and conscious suggestion a man makes to himself. It is the practice of making the imagination frame its own ideas in the faith that all ideas, once implanted in the mind, work themselves out in action.

One might say that auto-suggestion is simply the

practice of forming our own ideas and allowing them to influence our conduct, but those who have evolved the technique of this practice have something to tell us of the *best way* to frame these ideas and of the best technique by which to relate them to our conduct.

What are the best ideas and what is the best way to plant them in our minds ?

The best ideas, or suggestions, are those which are rational, desirable and positive. The mind will only be influenced by that which is possible: It will be hospitable to that which is desirable and it will give expression to a positive idea rather than a negative.

We may wish for things which are impossible but we cannot *will* them. I may wish that I were Prime Minister of England but, circumstanced as I am, the rational part of me says it is impossible. Therefore, my mind rejects the idea. There is no good in trying to force oneself. A little girl once defined "faith" as "believing what we know isn't true." Well, auto-suggestion is not believing what we know cannot come true.

"I am going to make a success of my vocation." That is a better suggestion, for I want to make a success of my vocation. It is also a rational suggestion, for there is no reason why I should not do so. "I will pass this examination" is another good suggestion, much better than "I think I will pass this examination," or, "Given a bit of luck, I hope to pass this examination." It is positive. It arouses the will and involves no counter-suggestions of failure.

Having suggested to oneself a rational, desirable and positive idea, one must leave it to work, believing that it will express itself in action.

The best way to make a suggestion is to take a formula which embodies the idea and make that formula as precise and clear as possible. Coué believed in a general formula. "Every day in every way I am getting better and better." This is far too general to be of use for many people, though we must remember that it did express a positive idea of health for most of Coué's patients. It embodied the idea of mastery over some specific physical ailment. For those who will better health it is as good a formula as any.

But for the generality of people *who do not know what they want*, but only desire to be better personalities, it is far too vague. It is much better to find our own idea of what we want to be and express it in a formula of our own making. We all want different things.

One man might make as his formula : " I am quite free from a desire for a smoke till lunch time."

Another : " I am able to rise each morning at seven-thirty without any trouble."

Another : " I am quite cool and self-confident when facing an audience."

Another : " I shall pass this examination."

It will be noticed that these formulas do not state facts. They state ideas or ideals which we wish to influence us. There is no end, of course, to the formulas we can make, but they must be formulas

which embody real ideals. That is, they must state as a fact what we sincerely wish to be a fact.

Having found our formula we must plant it in the mind and see that it penetrates. We must not merely wish it. A wish is not an idea. A wish has wings and flies away. An idea has hands and feet and gets to work. The best time for planting the idea is the last thing at night or the first thing in the morning, when it is received into the personality with the least resistance.

The formula embodying the idea should be said aloud and repeated many times, as though we are receiving it into ourselves with all the doors open to admit it. Whenever it is made, the body should be motionless, the muscles relaxed, the eyes closed.

What we are striving for is what Baudouin calls "an outcropping of the subconscious." It is the subconscious that is going to do the work so that the less conscious and resistant we are the better.

Having received the idea into ourselves by means of the formula in which it is embodied, we should leave it as we leave a seed planted in the ground and give it time to grow. Only there is this difference, a seed needs only one planting. A formula needs many plantings. It is not at all easy to imbed an idea into the depths of one's personality.

We may be too conscious of what we are doing, too critical and unreceptive. The seed may have been left on the hard surface of our minds and not become rooted in the subconscious at all. Without strain or fuss, we must quietly keep on planting, in confidence

that once the idea is received by the personality it will work. We must have faith in the process and await results with patience.

Coué gives a very good illustration of the working of suggestion in overcoming a bad habit.

“ Let us suppose the brain to be a board into which have been driven brads representing the ideas, the habits, the instincts, which determine our actions. If we perceive that in any individual there exists a bad idea, a bad habit, a bad instinct—in a word, a bad brad, let us take another brad representing the good idea, the good habit, the good instinct; let us place its point directly over the head of the bad brad, and strike on it a single blow with a hammer; in other words, let us make a suggestion.

“ The new brad will be driven a little way in, a millimetre perhaps, and the old one will be driven out for a corresponding distance. At each fresh blow of the hammer, at each fresh suggestion that is to say, the new brad will enter for an additional millimetre, and the bad one will emerge to the same extent. After a certain number of blows, the old brad will have been completely dislodged, and the new one will have taken its place.”

So we must be patient, yet confident. New habits are not created in a day. That they are being created is what matters.

Auto-suggestion is not quackery or tomfoolery. As we have already said, it is based on the psychological fact that an idea, once accepted by the mind, works itself out in action. The best way to prove

this is to try it and see. To-morrow morning when you feel a disinclination to rise, say to yourself quietly and restfully half a dozen times, "In two minutes I shall be out of bed." You still feel the same disinclination to get up, but curiously enough, in two minutes you *have* got up.

Well, that is a beginning. What about those other ideas which you feel are beyond your will-power? Why not express them in a formula and suggest them to yourself?

Points to Remember

1. "Do it now."
2. "I can" is better than "I am not sure."
3. Will the possible, and if it is possible, don't think it is too good to come true.
4. New habits are not created in a day.

CHAPTER VII

RULES FOR HABIT FORMATION

AUTO-SUGGESTION is the complement of meditation. By meditation we consciously work out for ourselves an ideal. By auto-suggestion we present that ideal to our subconscious minds. What we are aiming at is *a change in character*, and will is simply character in action.

A great many volitions are of no effect because they are isolated acts of will and not the outcome of a change in character. Take the case of a man who has given way to vice. He resolves never to fall again. He finds that his resolution makes no difference *because he himself has not radically altered*.

The desire is as strong as ever ; it is merely in the background, ready to assert itself in response to the slightest stimulus. It is not an isolated act of will that will work a cure, but a new life-direction. We are made by our ideals. It is they which form our desires and create our habits.

Augustine in his Confessions says pathetically and grandly, " I had my back to the light and my face to the things enlightened ; whence my face itself was not enlightened." We must turn about and face the light.

It is not enough to see that there are fine things in the world, or fine men and women in the world. We must be prepared to *be* and not merely to *admire*. Unless a man wants to *be* something, what does he want will-power for?

We must deal constantly with fundamentals. What do I want? What am I living for? What do I reckon to be worth while? What do I see in life of the good, the beautiful and the true? What must I sacrifice? What decision must I make? These are the questions we must ask ourselves.

The answers may be disconcerting. They may reveal that we have no ideal; no clear purpose; no fixed allegiance to something that is good or beautiful or true or in some way worth while. If that is so the sooner we find an ideal the better. There is no "will-power" without one.

Having discovered something to live for we must face the cost of achievement. The old self may need to be organized to achieve the goal. This will not take place in a day. Old habits of thought or activity will assert themselves and they must be replaced by new habits.

Bad habits are most easily broken by not fighting them. It does not seem heroic counsel, but the best way to deal with a bad habit is to run away. The boy addicted to self-abuse, instead of concentrating on his temptation with grim resistance, had far better throw himself into some activity that uses up his energy and engages his thought.

He may win the battle by fighting, but the possibility is that the force of imagination will be too

strong for him. It is far better to give the imagination nothing to feed on. Activity is the best cure for cravings.

Habits hardest to overcome are those which are bound up with a craving in the nervous system. Like the above, or excessive drinking or smoking. Here it is not only the imagination of the mind that induces them, but the morbid demands of the body. The body as well as the mind, therefore, must be brought under discipline. Getting up when one awakes in the morning, fresh air, physical exercise, must all be given their place.

To pamper the body and then to seek to master it by auto-suggestion is not common sense. We must think out a new régime for ourselves that will bring the body under discipline and make it servant, not master. There is plenty of wise guidance to be had on physical culture and the body can stand a lot of discipline.

In the attempt to break pleasurable habits we must avoid the pitfall of being over-sanguine, for if we attempt too much and fail we are apt to become so discouraged as to think it useless to try.

Say, for example, that you have a craving for a cigarette. Instead of saying to yourself, "I shall not light one for the next two hours," say to yourself, "I shall not light one for the next half-hour." And, having set yourself a test which you regard as within your compass, keep your word.

It may quite well be that you could keep off smoking for the next two hours but, if you did not, the

failure would so discourage you that you would distrust yourself and this distrust would make you lose ground. It is far better to engender confidence by proceeding from small to greater.

Habit-breaking is like training in athletics. If you proceed one day for a long walk and then next day suddenly double the distance you will overtire yourself and probably give up all athletic ambitions. The athlete works himself into condition gradually. Moral athleticism demands the same common sense. Its object is *without breaking down* to take longer and longer walks.

In the formation of new habits we must not be impatient with ourselves. There is an old story of a knight in Glamorganshire who once took on a wager with his friends that he would jump to the top of his castle. Totally incredulous, they accepted the terms he offered. He won his bet with the greatest of ease. There was a flight of stairs leading to the turret and he jumped up them one at a time! A series of small jumps was not so spectacular as one long jump, but he got there just the same. Habit is formed by similar repetition. One victory, another victory, and still another victory is the way to self-mastery.

When we do fail we must not be utterly cast down and give way to pessimistic thoughts. Having acknowledged our failure to ourselves we must study it objectively. Why did I break down to-day? Am I taking my good resolve for granted and forgetting to meditate on it? Have I grown tired of this process of auto-suggestion or think it no good? Did I switch

RULES FOR HABIT FORMATION

my mind away from the temptation immediately and turn to something else? What were the circumstances? How can I avoid them in the future?

Having discovered why we failed and so placed ourselves in a better position to deal with the emergency next time, we must turn away from the failure and seek to forget about it except for the lesson we have learned. Each temptation is a trial of strength. We have been worsted this time, but we shall do better next time. Forget and press forward.

Needless to say, we must cut off all stimulus that gives rise to the habit we are seeking to overcome and avoid its occasions. If certain companions conduce to temptation, they must be sacrificed and others obtained in their stead. If certain books or novels pander to the imagination, they must not be opened. We must cultivate such friendships, recreations and interests as conduce to the new ideal. To sit down and do nothing is no good. Life must express itself in activity, and if the old activity was bad we must find a better one.

The task of building up new habits is not easy, but it is not so formidable as it seems. Once formed, a habit sinks into the realm of the automatic. Like the fly-wheel of an engine, it takes a certain amount of force to get it started. But once started it carries on by its own momentum, and swings the engine over dead points that would otherwise require constantly to be passed by repeated acts of will.

To have formed good habits that work on their

own momentum is to save ourselves endless trouble. Also, good habits mean good character.

Habit is formed as the result of an ideal. It is the result of repeated efforts in a given direction. Given a compelling ideal that directs our energy, habit ultimately takes the place of "will-power" and then we have moral strength, the crowning dignity of man.

Points to Remember

1. Be prepared to *be* and not merely to *admire*.
2. Face the cost of achievement.
3. Bad habits are most easily broken by not fighting them. Run away!
4. Study your failures.
5. Good habits make good character.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

NOW let us summarize what we have been saying.

"Will-power" is the result of a well-organized personality.

It is the ideal which organizes the personality. Ideals may be good or bad. They may be adequate for the full expression of a man's powers, organizing all the sentiments, instincts and emotions; or they may be inadequate, involving only the satisfaction of some limited aspect of the self.

Our search for will-power is a search for a stimulating ideal. Such an ideal, when found, binds the self together and makes for purposive living. The great repressor of energy is aimlessness.

Will-power also involves self-respect. We must believe in ourselves, or have belief restored to us, if we are to live to any purpose. Self-respect is essential to self-exertion.

Inertia fights against activity. It must be overcome by deliberate reflection on the worth of the ideal.

The favourable sentiment towards the ideal must be given expression when it is strong

within us. Sentiments expressed in action result in habit.

“Divide and conquer” is a good maxim. The ideal is realized stage by stage. It is the present stage we have to deal with. To-morrow will look after itself.

We should accustom ourselves to the feeling of opposition. Opposition gives zest to life and the overcoming of opposition builds up confidence.

Auto-suggestion is helpful in fixing the ideal in our personalities. It involves quietude, perseverance and confidence.

The ideal so suggested should be rational, desirable and positive.

The function of auto-suggestion is to arouse the will. The will thus aroused is not some isolated act of volition but the whole personality. Will is character in action.

Volitions fail because they run counter to the tendencies of the self. These tendencies need to be brought under the dominion of a new ideal.

The cost of the new orientation must be faced.

Part of the cost may be a readiness to adopt alternative activities when temptation suggests itself, a willingness to forsake old companions, a great patience and perseverance.

A new habit is worth the price paid. It makes life function more easily and saves endless acts of volition.

The controlling power is the ideal. Ideals form

habits. Each man must find his own ideal. An adequate one is the secret of will-power.

* * *

We will finish up with one or two pieces of friendly counsel.

This book is serious, but that does not make it less interesting than casual reading. Apply to yourself what it says and you will get a better grip of it.

When you find it interesting and you feel that its subject-matter is helpful, read it again. It is a small book. Carry it about with you in your pocket and study it and make its counsels your own.

As its author, I am not tremendously anxious that you should pay me such attention. Probably I shall never know you and you will never know me; but I am firmly persuaded that we read too much and concentrate too little. If you actually bought this booklet with the object of improving your will-power, make use of it.

Do not expect some one to hand you out an ideal of life. Make it your business to find one. Finding an ideal is life's supreme business. Perhaps your ideal may be found in the home if you look on it with new eyes; perhaps in business. All around you men are living to some purpose. Do not drift with the crowd, even your own particular crowd.

Do not think that you are different from other people and were born with a weak will that is incurable. If you feel that your will is weak, ask yourself

why it became so. Was it want of interest, feeble motives or a hazy goal?

Begin to feel more intensely about your projects, take a man's interest in "building up the fabric of the world" and resolve that old habits shall give way to new. Be honest with yourself, look evils and difficulties in the face without evasion, pretexts or postponements and, with a good courage, take yourself in hand.

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